

**Affirmation:  
United Methodists  
for Lesbian, Gay,  
Bisexual and  
Transgendered  
Concerns**

Affirmation: United Methodist for  
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and  
Transgendered Concerns  
P.O. Box 1021  
Evanston, IL 60204  
[847] 733-9590  
<umaffirmation@yahoo.com>

Summer 1999  
Volume 24/Number 2

RECEIVED  
FEB 26 2024

BY: .....

DREW UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY

OCT 11 1999

# Affirmation

## Affirmation time at upcoming RCP Convocation

You have an opportunity to speak your mind on LGBT issues in the United Methodist Church and meet some of your National Affirmation Council members.

An Affirmation gathering before the Reconciling Congregation Program [RCP] Convocation from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Thursday, July 29.

The Affirmation pre-convocation gathering will be for LGBT persons only. This will be as a secure place as possible.

The RCP Convocation begins at 7 p.m. Thursday, July 29, with Opening Worship. The convocation will be at the University of North Texas, Denton, TX. The Closing Worship for the RCP Convocation will start at 11:30 a.m. Sunday, Aug. 1.

Affirmation Council members want to give members the opportunity to express their thoughts and concerns. We are particularly mindful that General Conference is only a few months away [May 2-12, 2000 in Cleveland, OH], and it has been a long time since we have had a chance to interact as members/council members. We hope you can join us Thursday, July 29.

For more information about the RCP Convocation and to register for the convocation, contact the RCP Office, 3801 N. Keeler Ave., Chicago, IL 60641 - voice phone: 773-736-5526;  
e-mail: <aff@rcp.org>;  
website: <http://www.rcp.org>.

If you cannot join us in Texas, please let us hear from you.

## Dell to appeal conviction

Rev. Greg Dell, pastor of Broadway UMC in Chicago, was found convicted in March for "disobedience to the order and discipline of the UMC" and suspended from his ministerial duties because he performed a holy union service for a gay couple in his congregation. On 26 March, a trial court of 13 clergy jurists found [10-3 vote] Rev. Dell guilty for performing a holy union that he performed on 19 September 1998. The jury found Rev. Dell of disobeying a 1996 statement added to the Social Principles stating: "Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches." The Judicial Council, equivalent to the Supreme Court, ruled that added sentence does carry the weight of church law even though it is in the Social Principles section.

*See Dell, Page 5*

## Complaints filed against Rev. Creech

Bishop Joel Martinez of Nebraska Conference has had complaints filed against Rev. Jimmy Creech for perform same-gender holy union. The number of complaints and names of those who filed the complaints are not being disclosed.

Rev. Jimmy Creech was charged and brought to trial for performing a holy union for two women in September 1997. Creech's trial questioned the legislation of a 1996 added statement to the Social Principles stating: "Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches." The Social Principles are "intended to be instructive and persuasive," but not lawfully binding. Rev. Creech was acquitted. After the acquittal, the Judicial Council, equivalent to the Supreme Court, ruled that added sentence is lawful even though it is in the Social Principles' section.

Rev. Creech was acquitted on 13 March 1998, and reinstated as pastor of the church that he served in Omaha, Nebraska. Nonetheless, he was not reappointed to the Omaha church, First UMC, the following year. Since July 1998, Creech has been on a leave of absence and resides at his North Carolina home.

Church law "is more clearly defined after the Judicial Council's ruling" according to Mel Luetchens, assistant to the bishop, "so I think that certainly makes a difference on the point, which was so important to the last trial [of Creech], as to whether that part of the *Discipline* would be interpreted as a law or as a guideline. We know now that it is to be interpreted."

## Mission Statement

Affirmation is an activist caucus of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered people organized to speak for ourselves. Together we:

proclaim a gospel of respect, love and justice;

relentlessly pursue policies and processes that support full participation of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered people in all areas and levels of The United Methodist Church;

overcome the barriers that diminish our common humanity by excluding or judging people because of their race, gender, class or physical abilities;

empower people to undertake works of inclusion and justice where they are.

## Affirmation Newsletter

is a quarterly publication. The official views of Affirmation are stated by the Co-Spokespersons. Opinions offered in signed columns, letters and articles are those of the writers and do not necessarily represent the opinions of Affirmation.

To save space in this newsletter:  
United Methodist Church = UMC  
United Methodist = UM  
Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered = LGBT

Coeditors  
David L. Gunnell and Jerry Nosen  
Editorial Assistant  
Judy Cara-Hicks

## Information

All Affirmation correspondence are mailed discretely.

All contributions to National Affirmation are tax deductible.

## Complaint dismissed against Rev. Holmes

The 21 January complaint against Rev. David Holmes of Council Bluffs, Iowa, was dismissed by the Iowa Conference bishop. The complaint was about Rev. Holmes aiding in the January 16 Holy Union in Sacramento, California for two lesbians [see other article on this page].

Bishop Charles Jordan wrote: "It is my conclusion that David Holmes did not violate paragraph 65C." His decision was made after meeting with a supervisory team and Holmes, consulting with cabinet members, other bishops, reviewing a video of the service, and examining the printed order of worship. Rev. Holmes' participation "consisted of being in the processional and sharing in a prayer with nearly 100 others," Jordan wrote. "He did not conduct nor did he have a leadership role in any part of the service. His presence was one of witness and solidarity."

Bishop Jordan's letter also reported that Rev. Holmes stated that he does not plan to conduct any Holy Unions and "has agreed that if circumstances arise in the future where he feels it necessary to reconsider this intention, he will consult with his bishop prior to any action." Jordan continued, "Those who seek changes are advised to follow the prescribed and accepted methods of our polity. I pray that we will boldly claim our unity in Christ and fully accept the diversity that exists among us. And when it becomes necessary to administer the law, may it be done in the spirit and attitude of grace."

## Charges brought against 68 clergy may be delayed

On 23 March, Bishop Melvin G. Talbert of the California-Nevada Conference announced that a complaint had been filed about the 16 January Holy Union in Sacramento, California. The complaint is filed against 68 California-Nevada UM ministers - now commonly known as the *Sacramento 68*.

At the January Holy Union for two lesbians, 167 clergy participated in the service. The officiators included 90 UM clergy from California-Nevada Conference who were joined by 13 clergy from other denominations, plus 58 UM clergy from other annual conferences, some of whom participated in absentia, and 6 former clergy who had surrendered their orders due to their sexual orientation.

The complaint is about a 1996 statement added to the Social Principles stating: "Ceremonies that celebrate homosexual unions shall not be conducted by our ministers and shall not be conducted in our churches." The Judicial Council, equivalent to the Supreme Court, ruled that the added sentence does have such force even though it is in the Social Principles section.

The committee in charge of investigating the complaint has scheduled meetings in September for the *Sacramento 68*. Most believe that the meetings will go beyond September, because each of the *Sacramento 68* ministers has 30 days to respond to the complaints. "That's going to take a little while," said Rev. Ron Swisher, head of the committee on investigation. "Each individual has a right to have a hearing. Some might go as a group, which would probably help, but we don't know at this point what each one is going to do," said Swisher.

Rev. Don Fado, the minister who organized the January Holy Union, stated that the *Sacramento 68* is "not in lockstep thinking. As an individual, I hope that we will be able to be in solidarity. That will be my preference." It would take years to have 68 individual separate trials. "Our intent," said Rev. Fado, "is not to break the system down. We don't want to do that."

Clergy trials are rare, but in the last two years there have been two high profile clergy trials. Rev. Jimmy Creech was charged and brought to trial for performing a holy union for two women in September 1997. Creech's trial questioned the legislation of a 1996 added statement to the Social Principles. The Social Principles are "intended to be instructive and persuasive," but not lawfully binding. Rev. Creech was acquitted. After the acquittal, the Judicial Council, equivalent to the Supreme Court, ruled that added sentence is lawful even though it is in the Social Principles' section. Rev. Greg Dell was convicted in March and

See *Sacramento 68*, page 3

## LOVE: The Heart of God for the People of God"

The California-Nevada Chapter of the Methodist Federation for Social Action [MFSA] wrote a reflection for UMC California-Nevada Jurisdiction [concerning] Ellie Charlton and Jeanne Barnett's Holy Union performed on 16 January 1999. Their statement's objectives are "to witness prophetically to Biblical faith in solidarity with persons who are oppressed," and, "to defend civil liberties and human rights as set forth in the Biblical tradition and in the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights."

"I think we know far more of God's heart than we do of the mind of God," the MFSA statement quoting William Sloan Coffin. "It's God's heart that Christ on the cross lays bare for the whole world to see. And God is love, and those who abide in love abide in God and God abides in them. . . For Christians the norm is Christ's love. If people can show tenderness and constancy in caring that honors Christ's love, what matters their sexual orientation?" [A Passion for the Possible].

The MFSA statement thanked God for the "prophetic witness" of Ellie and Jeanne [long time members of Affirmation], as well as Rev. Don Fado [a long time member of MFSA] and the clergy, laity, and all those who facilitated [and were present at] at Ellie and Jeanne's Holy Union.

The reflection continue with offering moving closer to "the heart of God" by stating:

"--Scripture is not, as our culture purports, heterosexual. Scripture cannot be reduced to sexual issues at all. Scripture is about covenant. The terms of covenant are about love and justice. Justice is organized love, love in action.

"-- Because of love and compassion, God heard the cries of a people in slavery and sent liberation. Out of that liberation, there developed covenant. Making covenant freely and fully is not possible but for our liberation. Our faith insists that later the fullness of God's love was made flesh in Jesus. And a new understanding of covenant was given, sealed in Jesus' own body and blood.

"--Creation, as reported in biblical accounts, is good. God says so, again and again. Creation cannot be reduced to sexual issues or orientation. Creation, as a gift of God's love, offers a wide diversity in every aspect of life, including sexual orientation.

### **Sacramento 68** *from page 2*

suspended from his ministerial duties because he performed a holy union service for a gay couple in his congregation. [see **Charges brought against 68 clergy may be delay**, page 2] Rev. Dell was suspended from his ministerial duties starting on July 5. This suspension lasts until he signs a promise that he will not perform anymore sex-gender holy unions, or the UMC changes its restrictions against such types of holy unions. Dell is appealing.

Having 68 individual trials would take years as well as very costly. Rev. Greg Dell's trial cost over \$123,000. [see **Dell**, page 7] Measuring that by 68 times would cost \$8,364,000!

"--All sexuality and all sexual expression, indeed all of life, is to be measured by one standard: Does it contribute to a law fulfilled in gospel, an order and discipline perfected in justice and love? As a new creation in Christ, we dare not miss any opportunity to encourage loving and lasting relationships between persons. This need is underscored by the "consumer/disposer" culture in which we live.

"--Covenanting, as persons and as peoples, is an art form and a practical, biblical instrument for the careful, prayerful attentiveness needed to nurture any lasting loving relationship. MFSA is grateful that the holy union has so stirred the hearts of our conference and our connection. Let us explore and embrace the furthest possible reach and resiliency of the covenants made among us.

"-- As we focus our hearts on love, and on covenants of love and justice, we will move ever nearer to the heart of God.

The MFSA reflection asked to view closely at those who use "scripture to justify cultural and ecclesial prejudice toward people because of their sexual orientation and because of the expression of their sexuality in committed covenant love."

*See MFSA, page 4*

## Affirmation National Council

One woman in New York

One woman in  
Pennsylvania

One woman in Texas

One man in  
Washington, DC

Richard Bates  
Austin, TX

Sylvia Bauer  
Austin, TX

John R. Calhoun  
Oklahoma City, OK

W. Allison Flint  
Jackson, MS

David L. Gunnell  
Evanston, IL

Rick Huskey  
Washington, DC

Jeanne Knepper  
Portland, OR

David Meredith  
Columbus, OH

Mary Padilla  
Corona, NY

Deborah Robinson  
Essex Junction, VT

Gary Shephard  
Watauga, TX

William Webber  
Somerville, NJ

## Affirmation National Council

Judith WestLee  
Minneapolis, MN

Mark Wilson  
Washington, DC

Andrew Ulman  
Allston, MA

### **Complaint against Chicago bishop reported 'reconciled'**

A complaint filed last December against Bishop C. Joseph Sprague [Chicago area] "was resolved to the satisfaction of both parties in the true spirit of Christian reconciliation," according to an announcement made March 29 by Bishop Jonathan D. Keaton [Ohio East Area], president of the North Central Jurisdiction College of Bishops. The complaint, filed by the Rev. Carson Daniel Lauffer of Prophetstown, IL, accused Bishop Sprague of "dissemination of doctrines contrary to the established standards of doctrine of the church" because of his views that the church's rules regarding homosexual people should be changed. The announcement did not give details of how the reconciliation was accomplished. Rev. Lauffer said the complaint was resolved because "we agreed that we have agreement on core issues, but we do theology differently."

- UM Reporter

### **SMU adds sexual orientation policy**

Southern Methodist University added sexual orientation to its nondiscrimination policy. However, the University's employee benefits will not incorporate same-gender domestic partners.

"The University expects its campus community to respect the rights and dignity of all its members in matters of personnel consideration, admissions, or academic evaluation," the University's new policy states. "This commitment also includes the principle of nondiscrimination on the basis of sexual orientation."

### **PFLAG & Millennium March on Washington for Equality**

PFLAG 2000 National Conference -- which immediately precedes the historic Millennium March [looking in future issues about the March]-- will be held at the Crystal Gateway Marriott at 1700 Jefferson Davis Hwy., Arlington, VA. April 28-30, 2000. Come network and hear nationally recognized speakers. Choose from 30 great workshops. For more information, call 202/638-4200 or write to PFLAG, 1101 14th St. NW, Suite 1030, Washington, DC 20005, or e-mail at <www.pflag.org>.

### **MFSA**

*from page 3*

Homophobia in the UMC is hurtful to all. Quoting Bishop Talbert in the MFSA statement: "as we struggle with divergent views, on this as on any issue, always to . . . seek to do justice, and to act in a way that is consistent with the teachings and compassion of Jesus."

### **UM Board urges Congress**

UM Board of Church and Society urges the United States Congress to pass a bill that would grant all people, regardless of their sexual orientation, federal protection from workplace discrimination. The bill known as Employment Non-discrimination Act of 1999 [ENDA] does not apply to military, religious groups, or companies with less than 15 employees.

"The general board is directed to 'speak its convictions, interpretations, and concerns to the Church and to the world,'" quoted Rev. Thom Wolf Fassett, General Secretary. "We support this legislation because it is a matter of simple justice. Gay or lesbian persons - or persons perceived to be homosexual - are often unjustly fired or denied job opportunities due to their sexual orientation," said Fassett in his statement. "The legislation would not make one accept homosexuality. It does not even attempt to change minds on the issues. It would extend to homosexuals the same civil rights protections in the workplace as are accorded women, minorities, people with disabilities, and religious persons."

The Board of Church and Society supported the ENDA back in 1997 when US legislatures sensed that the bill lacked support from the religious community. "In reality," said Fassett statement, "most mainline protestant denominations support this legislation. We urge Congress to swiftly pass ENDA."



## Dell

from page 1

Rev. Dell was suspended from his ministerial duties starting on 5 July. This suspension will last until he signs a promise that he will not perform anymore same-gender holy unions, or the UMC changes its restrictions against such types of holy unions. Rev. Dell repudiates signing any type of statement saying that it discriminates against nearly one-third of Broadway's 180 members. Northern Illinois' Bishop Sprague [who brought the charges against Dell] said that Broadway UMC would be appointed an interim pastor for no more than one year, and that Rev. Dell's new role is a "holding action." If General Conference changes the restrictions, Dell would be reappointed as permanent pastor at Broadway.

### Open letter from Broadway UMC

In an open letter, Broadway UMC's congregation avowed its devotion to being United Methodists. The letter was adopted by 60 church members at a church meeting. The letter stated Broadway's congregation was "obeying Christ's mandate to be a light to the world. For that, our pastor has been suspended and many in our community have been denied full ministry and acceptance. We feel great pain for the rejection of the vital ministry that reflects so clearly who we are. Many are experiencing anger, bitterness, frustration and a sense of betrayal."

According to the letter, some members question if whether who they are makes them no longer welcome in the UMC? However, the letter underscore that "We are United Methodist." The letter continues that Broadway pledges to produce change within the UMC so that Rev. Dell can carry on his ministry and return to Broadway UMC. "We do not want other pastors like Greg Dell and congregations like ours to face the same injustice that we have. Too many have suffered too much already."

### In All Things Charity

After 5 July, Rev. Dell will become director of *In All Things Charity* [IATC] -- an unofficial UMC organization with a network of clergy and those who support the full inclusion of LGBT people. IATC was formed in January 1997, and initiated the "Statement of Conscience" that denounces the UMC's actions regarding towards LGBT UM. There are about 1,500 clergy and 500 laity signatures supporting the IATC's statement. IATC's goal is to be a very strong presence at General Conference. IATC is supported by Broadway UMC's ministries and Rev. Dell will reside at Broadway's parsonage. Dell will be working three-quarters time at IATC and one-quarter time as a consultant to Broadway's interim pastor.

## Dell files appeal

A date has been for the 9 August to hold a hearing on Greg Dell's appeal. On 21 April, an appeal was filed with the bishop who presided over the trial, Bishop Jack Tuell. Since the trial's jurisdiction was within the Northern Illinois Conference, the appeal goes to the North Central Jurisdiction. If a third appeal is requested beyond the North Central Jurisdiction Court it would be to the Judicial Council which is equivalent to the Supreme Court.

The nine members and six reserve members [both clergy and laity] of the North Central Jurisdiction's Committee on Appeals will conduct the hearing. The Committee on Appeals will follow paragraph 2627g in the *Book of Discipline* which states, "The appellate body shall determine two questions only: [1] Does the weight of the evidence sustain the charge or charges? [2] Were there such errors of church law as to vitiate the verdict and/or the penalty? These questions shall be determined by the records of the trial and the argument of counsel for the Church and for the respondent. The Committee on Appeals shall in no case hear witnesses."

The Committee on Appeals has the option of reversing part or all of the trial court's judgments; remanding the case for a new trial; modifying the penalty [not higher than that affixed at the trial]; or letting the original verdict stand as is.

Rev. Larry Pickens, Dell's attorney said, "We think the trial court did not apply the evidentiary standard of clear and convincing evidence in relation to the verdict... The penalty is unconstitutional in that it's an indefinite penalty designed to extract a pledge based on future action." During the trial, Pickens did not argue Dell's part of the Holy Union, only Dell's conviction was based on a charge of disobedience to the UMC. When the court finished its deliberations, a statement was made that it had difficulty determining whether Rev. Dell had been disobedient because what constituted disobedience was not adequately defined by the UMC or in the *Book of Discipline*.

### Cost of first trial over \$123,000

The March 1999 trial that prosecuted Rev. Greg Dell cost the Northern Illinois Conference over \$123,000.00. The appeal trial is a another allotment and it is expected the costs will continue to rise. \$107,000 of the trial cost went to pay Burke, Warren, MacKay & Serritella, a Chicago law firm that assisted Rev. Stephen Williams in prosecuting Dell.

Northern Illinois' Council on Finance and Administration oversees the expenditure of the trial's prosecution. The chair of this Council, Pat Beal, said, "the shock is in the

*See Dell, page 7*

## Gay And Lesbian Pride Month

### A Proclamation by The President of the United States of America

Thirty years ago this month, at the Stonewall Inn in New York City, a courageous group of citizens resisted harassment and mistreatment, setting in motion a chain of events that would become known as the Stonewall Uprising and the birth of the modern gay and lesbian civil rights movement. Gays and lesbians, their families and friends, celebrate the anniversary of Stonewall every June in America as Gay and Lesbian Pride Month; and, earlier this month, the National Park Service added the Stonewall Inn, as well as the nearby park and neighborhood streets surrounding it, to the National Register of Historic Places.

I am proud of the measures my Administration has taken to end discrimination against gays and lesbians and ensure that they have the same rights guaranteed to their fellow Americans. Last year, I signed an Executive order that amends Federal equal employment opportunity policy to prohibit discrimination in the Federal civilian work force based on sexual orientation. We have also banned discrimination based on sexual orientation in the granting of security clearances. As a result of these and other policies, gay and lesbian Americans serve openly and proudly throughout the Federal Government. My Administration is also working with congressional leaders to pass the Employment Non-Discrimination Act [see **UM Board urges Congress**, page 4], which would prohibit most private employers from firing workers solely because of their sexual orientation.

America's diversity is our greatest strength. But, while we have come a long way on our journey toward tolerance, understanding, and mutual respect, we still have a long way to go in our efforts to end discrimination. During the past year, people across our country have been shaken by violent acts that struck at the heart of what it means to be an American and at the values that have always defined us as a Nation. In 1997, the most recent year for which we have statistics, there were more than 8,000 reported hate crimes in our country -- almost one an hour. Now is the time for us to take strong and decisive action to end all hate crimes, and I reaffirm my pledge to work with the Congress to pass the Hate Crimes Prevention Act.

But we cannot achieve true tolerance merely through legislation; we must change hearts and minds as well. Our greatest hope for a just society is to teach our children to respect one another, to appreciate our differences, and to recognize the fundamental values that we hold in common. As part of our efforts to achieve this goal, earlier this spring, I announced that the Departments of Justice and Education will work in partnership with educational and other private sector organizations to reach out to students and teach them that our diversity is a gift. In addition, the Department of Education has issued landmark guidance that explains Federal standards against sexual harassment and prohibits sexual harassment of all students regardless of their sexual orientation; and I have ordered the Education Department's civil rights office to step up its enforcement of anti-discrimination and harassment rules. That effort has resulted in a ground breaking guide that provides practical guidance to school administrators and teachers for developing a comprehensive approach to protecting all students, including gays and lesbians, from harassment and violence.

Since our earliest days as a Nation, Americans have strived to make real the ideals of equality and freedom so eloquently expressed in our Declaration of Independence and Constitution. We now have a rare opportunity to enter a new century and a new millennium as one country, living those principles, recognizing our common values, and building on our shared strengths.

Now, therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim June 1999 as Gay and Lesbian Pride Month. I encourage all Americans to observe this month with appropriate programs, ceremonies, and activities that celebrate our diversity, and to remember throughout the year the gay and lesbian Americans whose many and varied contributions have enriched our national life.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this eleventh day of June, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred and ninety-nine, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-third.

William J. Clinton

## Affirmation E-Mail

Affirmation now has an e-mail list open to members only by invitation. Discussion on this list is on issues relating to LGBT concerns within the United Methodist Church.

The environment on this list is one of open and spiritual sharing between United Methodist sexual minorities and their allies. This is a safe space; it is a private list.

If you would like to be considered to join this list, please e-mail a brief introduction of yourself and your e-mail address to <umaffirmation@yahoo.com>

---

## Dell

from page 5

number of hours billed" by the prosecution's hired law firm. Rev. Williams said, "The promise I made was to try to be judicious in the use of time. I believe I was. However, I determined that this was a historic, defining and pivotal moment in the life of the church as well as in the life of [Northern Illinois] Conference. I felt my larger duty as Church Counsel [prosecutor] was to make every effort to defend the church's interest and be prepared."

No Conference funds were used to pay for Dell's defense. According to Broadway UMC's Trial Steering Committee's chair, Courtney Cosgrove, the defense costs prior to the appeal totalled \$8,837.36. Dell's defense fund came from fund raisers and long hours from many volunteers.

The expenses of the Dell trial as of 3 May 1999

### Legal Fee\*

Burke, Warren, MacKay & Serritella	
Jan	\$10,607.80
Feb	\$20,828.43
Mar	\$68,510.34
Subtotal	<b>\$99,946.57</b>

### Other

Security	\$4,380.00
Food	\$5,532.30
Bishop Tuell [trial judge]	\$1,854.69
Church Counsel [prosecutor] travel	\$1,167.95
Miscellaneous	\$ 788.95
Tickets to attend	\$ 365.25
Court reporter	\$1,185.30
Subtotal	<b>\$15,274.44</b>

**Total** **\$115,221.01**

\*Dec \$8,009.25 charged to 1998

## Dell elected as Delegate to GC 2000

In June, depending on Dell's suspension, the Northern Illinois Annual Conference [NIC] elected Rev. Greg Dell as a clergy delegate to General Conference 2000. In a clear protest against the move that the UMC has pointed toward anti-homosexual policy,

## Hawaii Marriage Case still lingering Canada putting same-gender couples on par

After a relatively quiet legislative session with no action on marriage, marriage proponents in Hawaii await the final disposition of the Baehr case by Hawaii's Supreme Court. The court has not hinted at any action, but has cleared its docket substantially---it is now down to 12 cases which are at least three years old. News of the Baehr case is posted to

<<http://members.tripod.com/~MPHAWAII/>>

That web site is updated frequently.

Canada's Supreme Court is moving Canada toward putting same-gender couples on par with heterosexual couples in regards to civil rights. The full text of that 8-1 decision is available through a link that has been posted to the Marriage Project Hawaii web site: <<http://www.egale.ca.>>

The Marriage Project Hawaii web site also has links to two reviews of the court decision by Canadian newspapers and a link to a Honolulu Star Bulletin editorial about the decision. Right now, Parliament is likely to change Canada's laws to avoid discrimination but probably keep back the word "marriage".

Marriage Project Hawaii needs funds. Donations are fully tax deductible. They can be sent to Marriage Project Hawaii, PO Box 11690, Honolulu, HI 96828.

---

NIC elected a slate of delegates that support change in the UMC. Twelve delegates were elected [six clergy and six lay members]. Dell was the sixth clergy member elected.

A resolution at NIC recommends that all NIC delegates "acknowledge the commitment of two homosexual persons to be in loving and mutually beneficial relationship with each other and with God." It also called for pastoral guidance in spiritual and education discernment process regarding the care of all members of the UMC.

The resolution also called for the deletion of the sentence in the *Discipline*: "Although we do not condone this practice of homosexuality and consider this practice incompatible with Christian teaching, we affirm that God's grace is available to all." NIC resolution calls to replace the deleted sentence with: "Within our church, the practice of homosexuality is both celebrated and condemned. We affirm that God's grace is available to all. Therefore, we commit ourselves to prayer and conferencing across the

*See Dell, page 8*

## A World Without Gay or Lesbian People

At times it seems as if some people would prefer a world where no lesbians or gays existed. But what would that world really look like? Here is a look at what the world might have been like if it had never included people who were homosexual or had a significant homosexual relationship in life.

President Gerald Ford might have died in 1975 because a gay ex-marine Oliver "Bill" Sipple would not have been alive to push away the gun of an assassin in San Francisco.

The United States, Britain, and the other Allies might have lost World War 2 because Alan Turing, a gay British mathematician, would never have been born. Turing broke one of the Nazis' most important codes to help shorten the war.

African-Americans might have struggled longer before receiving civil rights because there would have been no Bayard Rustin, the gay man who organized the 1963 March on Washington. This the march where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., made his famous "I Have a Dream" speech.

Religious life would have been lessened without the Christian voices of Malcolm Boyd, Troy Perry, Jane Spahr or John McNeil. Christians would also have a difficult time conceiving the New Testament without the scholarship skills of Desiderius Erasmus [the basis for the Tyndale and King James Versions].

Our musical world would have been impoverished because gay American composer Aaron Copeland would have never been born. Russian composer Peter Ilyich Tchaikovsky would not have existed, neither would have Leonard Bernstein, English composer Benjamin Britten, or singers Bessie Smith, Melissa Etheridge, or Elton John. Katherine Bates would have never written "America the Beautiful." We would have also missed the folk songs of Stephen Foster or the clever compositions of Cole Porter.

We would never have listened to the "Sweetheart of Sigma Chi" or "I Left My Heart in San Francisco" -- both were written by gay men to their lovers [in both cases, publishers demanded that gender pronouns be switched].

Western art would look very different because neither Michelangelo or Leonardo da Vinci would have been around. And of course, we would have missed Plato and a woman Plato honored with respect as the "tenth muse" -- Sappho.

The Disney movie hits "The Little Mermaid" and "Beauty and the Beast" would have been much duller because Howard Ashman would not have been alive to write their Academy Award winning songs. Or imagine "Star Wars" or "Schindler's List" without the scores of John Williams.

Literature would have been lessened because many authors would never have been born, including Pulitzer Prize winning

poet W.H. Auden, Nobel Prize winning author Patrick White of Australia, E.M. Forster, Virginia Woolf, Willa Cather, Gertrude Stein, and Walt Whitman.

Movie theaters would have been duller: no Rock Hudson or Marlene Dietrich or Montgomery Clift. Actually, many of the most important plays of the American stage would never have been written because gay playwright Tennessee Williams would not have existed. We would have also missed the plays of Edward Albee or the brilliant acting of Sir Laurence Olivier.

Who else would have been missing? Sports stars like Martina Navratilova or Greg Louganis or Brian Orser would be gone. The list of people who have had significant same-gender relationships is very long and includes Socrates, King Richard the Lion Hearted, Queen Christina of Sweden, Eleanor Roosevelt and so many more.

We may never know the cause of homosexual orientation -- but one thing is sure. It would be difficult to envision or recognize a civilized world without the contributions of gays and lesbians.

*Adapted from Diane Silver's The New Civil War. 1997.*

### Dell

*from page 7*

church in which we can reflect on the issues of homosexuality and human sexuality, in general. We encourage the church's dialogue to be grounded in its understanding of Scripture, reason, tradition, and experience."

Bishop Sprague of NIC ruled that Rev. Dell was eligible for the election because Dell's suspension begins on 5 July. Rev. Dell is an active clergy member of NIC until 5 July. Nevertheless, Sprague ruling stated that unless Dell's appeal changes his suspension, or Dell signs a pledge not to perform any more same-gender Holy Unions, he will not be eligible to be seated at General Conference.

"The trial was easier than this election in a lot of ways," wrote Dell in an open letter to supporters. "But the election should not be misunderstood." He said that while the NIC's actions were "to some extent about me as a candidate," it was about much more. "It was about a vision of the church and a vision of faithfulness. And it was about having the disciplined commitment to bring that vision to reality."

NIC was the first UMC Annual Conference to declare as a Reconciling Conference in the Reconciling Congregation Program.

*-- some sources from UM News Service*